



Smithsonian

*National Museum of American History Kenneth E. Behring Center*

## Guide to the Paul Duncan Film Collection

NMAH.AC.0827

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## Collection Overview

<b>Repository:</b>	Archives Center, National Museum of American History
<b>Title:</b>	Paul Duncan Film Collection
<b>Date:</b>	1937-1941
<b>Identifier:</b>	NMAH.AC.0827
<b>Creator:</b>	Duncan, James T. Duncan, Paul
<b>Extent:</b>	0.5 Cubic feet
<b>Language:</b>	English .
<b>Summary:</b>	One film documenting use of farm tools and machinery of the late 19th early 20th century.

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## Administrative Information

### Acquisition Information

Donated to the Archives Center, National Museum of American History, Smithsonian by James T. Duncan, son of Paul J. Duncan, in November 2002.

### Related Materials

#### **Materials in the Archives Center**

The Robinson and Via Family Papers, 1845-2000 (AC0475)

The William C. Kost Farm Records, 1939-1989 (AC0481)

### Processing Information

Processed by Franklin A. Robinson, Jr., archivist, January 2005

### Preferred Citation

Paul Duncan Film Collection, 1937-1941, Archives Center, National Museum of American History.

### Restrictions

Collection is open for research.

### Conditions Governing Use

Collection items available for reproduction, but the Archives Center makes no guarantees concerning copyright restrictions. Other intellectual property rights may apply. Archives Center cost-recovery and use fees may apply when requesting reproductions.

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## Biographical / Historical

Between 1937 and 1941, amateur film maker, Paul Jasper Duncan (1899-1986), documented non-mechanized farming practices in the eastern Pennsylvania region where he had grown up. Duncan was

born in Meadville, Pennsylvania on March 21, 1899. He was the son of Raymond and Nellie Thayer Duncan. Duncan's maternal grandfather, Charles F. Thayer (1848-1933), lived in nearby Atlantic next to the W. Clark McMillen farm. In 1901, Myrna K. Thayer, one of Duncan's maternal aunts, married W. Clark McMillen. Clark McMillen was a full-time farmer. About 1918, Raymond Duncan and his family moved to Atlantic and lived in the Thayer home next door to the McMillen farm. During his youth, Duncan worked on the McMillen farm when labor was needed and when he needed to earn some money but he never had any interest in becoming a farmer. Duncan graduated from Meadville High School in 1919.

Duncan attended Pennsylvania State University for a year studying mechanical engineering. He returned to Meadville taking a job as a teacher for manual training (shop, woodworking, etc.). He married Alice Driver but within a month she died of "milk fever". Duncan returned to Penn State completing one more year toward a degree before moving to Chicago in the fall of 1922. He married Gertrude Glover in 1924 and in the fall of 1938 they moved to Des Plaines, Illinois. They had two children: Margaret (b. 1929) and James (b. 1932). Duncan worked as a mechanical design engineer for the Universal Oil Company and the Ludlow Typograph Company.

In 1937, Duncan purchased an 8mm movie camera. He had an interest in still photography and this interest extended to motion pictures. During summer family trips to Atlantic in 1937, 1939 and 1941 Duncan documented three farming practices on the McMillen farm: making hay (1937), threshing wheat (1941), and cradling and flailing (1941). During this time the farm was being worked by McMillen and his son-in-law Roy Ferrin (d. 1945). With the exception of cradling and flailing, the farm work was not staged and coincided with the Duncan family visits to Atlantic. At the time that Duncan filmed cradling and flailing the wheat had been cut, so McMillen is seen cutting and binding sheaves of oats instead. In addition to McMillen, Ferrin and Duncan's nephew Neil Duncan are seen in the films.

After retiring from the Ludlow Typographic Company in 1968, Duncan and his wife moved to Dos Cabezas, Cochise County, Arizona. He died in 1986.

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## Scope and Contents

Filmed entirely on location at the W. Clark McMillen Farm in Atlantic, Pennsylvania, the Paul Duncan Film Collection documents three types of now obsolete farming practices using draft horses and manual labor: making hay (1937), threshing wheat (1939), and cradling & flailing (1941). The film is 8mm, black and white and color. Edge codes date from 1926, 1932, and 1934-35.

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## Arrangement

Collection arranged into one series.

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## Abbreviations

OF = Original Film

RV = Reference Video

MV = Master Video

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## Names and Subject Terms

This collection is indexed in the online catalog of the Smithsonian Institution under the following terms:

Subjects:

Agricultural machinery  
Agriculture -- Pennsylvania  
Draft horses  
Farm equipment  
Farmers  
Harvesting -- Pennsylvania

Types of Materials:

Motion pictures (visual works) -- 1930-1950

Names:

McMillen, Clark

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## Container Listing

Box 1, Item OF 827.01;	Harvesting on the McMillen Farm, 1937-1941 Notes: 400f, 8mm, b&w, color, silent, camera original reversal; a compilation reel of amateur shot film detailing farming practices using draft horses and manual labor on the McMillen farm in Atlantic, Pennsylvania:
Box 1, Item MV 827.01;	
Box 1, Item RV 827.01	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Making hay, 1937, Neil Duncan appears briefly</li><li>2. Threshing Wheat, 1939</li><li>3. Cradling and Flailing, 1941, W. Clark McMillen</li></ol> <p>Camera Operator: Paul J. Duncan</p> <p>Persons Pictured: Roy Ferrin, James and Margaret Duncan, Neil Duncan, W. Clark McMillen</p>